

## On the Green Front by Rogelio A. Maduro

### Refrigerant shortages becoming acute

*Americans are about to start paying the dramatic costs of the ban on chlorofluorocarbons.*

As summer approaches, some 30 million Americans will be heading to a car repair shop to have their car air conditioners serviced. Some will be lucky to pay only \$200 for the service, close to 10 times what it used to cost before the ban on chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs). Others will have to retrofit their air conditioning units at a cost of \$600-800. But many will be unable to have their units fixed. The reason is that, unbeknownst to most of them, a battle is now raging behind the scenes over who will control the shrinking supplies of refrigerants.

Almost all air conditioners and refrigerators in existence today require CFCs to operate. The ban on CFCs is already taking effect, however, and the production of these useful chemicals has been severely restricted. At the same time, the so-called "drop-in" replacements, touted by the con artists who promoted the ban on CFCs, have failed to materialize. That leaves the owners of such equipment three choices: 1) find supplies of CFCs to recharge the equipment, 2) retrofit the equipment to accept the expensive CFC substitutes, or 3) scrap the equipment and buy a new system which uses the CFC substitutes.

The problem with the last two choices, besides the enormous expense involved, is the fact that hundreds of millions of pieces of equipment would have to be retrofitted or scrapped. It will simply be impossible to produce all this equipment in the next two years.

That leaves recharging as the only viable option for millions of users. But with dwindling supplies, the

question becomes, who will have access to CFCs? At present, the Mobile Air Conditioning Society (MACS) is lobbying strenuously to get Congress to allocate that supply for use in car air conditioners. Building owners and operators are lobbying to have that supply used to recharge building chillers. Not far behind is the food industry, which is clamoring that the CFCs should be allocated to them, or the food supply will rot.

The shortage of CFCs is so serious that it has become front-page news in the trade press. The March 21 issue of the *Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration News* carried the bold headline "Mobile, Stationary [CFC]-12 Users Compete for Dwindling Supplies." The publication warned its readers to "expect a crunch this year as [CFC]-12 stockpiles begin to dwindle."

Shortages will become worse because of the fact that stockpiles of CFCs may not be usable, and because of the dismal failure of the CFCs recycling program. As the *News* noted, "many 30-lb cylinders have come onto the market that had been stored, some for long periods of time. Many of these cylinders either are inoperable or, once opened, fail to seal again, blowing the remainder of their charges."

The CFCs recycling scheme has failed to deliver the substantial amounts of recycled CFCs that had been expected. The problem is that if two different types of CFCs are mixed together in a container, the entire batch must be destroyed. Most containers received by the recyclers so far have

been of mixed CFCs. Furthermore, the quality of recycled CFCs is poor. Compressor failure occurs seven times more frequently when recycled CFCs rather than virgin CFCs are used.

All these problems will surface this summer. Ward Atkinson, a technical adviser to MACS, warned in an interview with the *News* that "a shortage of CFC-12 could crop up as early as this year," and that this "will surprise some people." Curiously enough, Atkinson, and MACS, lobbied strenuously to have CFCs banned. MACS has been telling its members that they will make a bundle of money from the CFCs ban. After all, they reason, cars need air conditioners.

What will Congress decide? The *News* editorially asked, "Wouldn't those shrinking stocks of [CFC]-12 be better reserved for cooling schools, hospitals, and manufacturing operations that haven't yet undergone system conversions?"

The real issue, however, is why ban CFCs at all. CFCs were banned under the excuse that they allegedly deplete the ozone layer. The truth, however, as documented by this writer in the book *The Holes in the Ozone Scare, the Scientific Evidence that the Sky Is not Falling*, is that the ozone depletion theory is a scientific fraud. CFCs pose no danger to the ozone layer.

The real reason they were banned is that there is a lot of money (some \$5 trillion) to be made in the sale of patented CFC substitutes and replacement equipment. In all, this may prove to be the biggest con job of the century.

Rep. John Doolittle (R-Calif.) has introduced House Res. 291, which would raise all these issues. Instead of sweltering this summer, call your congressman and senators and demand that they support H.R. 291. If they refuse, vote them out of office. This may turn out to be a hot election year.